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## THE SECULAR HEBREW POETRY OF ITALY

BY A. B. RHINE, Hot Springs, Ark.

### PREFATORY REMARKS

THE present series of articles is, as far as I know, the first attempt at an exhaustive study of the secular Hebrew poetry written in Italy. As I had nothing of value to add to the study of religious Hebrew poetry which had already received careful treatment at the hands of such masters as Zunz, Dukes, Geiger, Rapoport, and others, I have confined myself to the secular branch of Hebrew song. Some Italian Hebrew poets are unfortunately inaccessible, being still buried in the libraries; nor was I able to acquire all the poetical works published, far away as I am from the centers of Jewish literary activity. I have, however, succeeded in accumulating quite a collection of Italian Hebrew poets; and, on several occasions, I was able to consult the Jewish Department of the New York Public Library as well as the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary, with the result, I confidently believe, that no important poetic contribution escaped my notice.

In the treatment of the subject I followed Delitzsch, and it is on his "*Jüdische Poesie*" that this essay is based. Delitzsch, however, covering as he does the entire field of Hebrew poetry, is necessarily very brief in dealing with particular countries. Moreover, written as his work was in 1836, there is nearly a century of Hebrew poetry, and

the most important at that, that he had no possibility of touching upon at all. Slouschz's "*La Renaissance de la Littérature Hébraïque*" is devoted to Hebrew literature in general and treats of poetry only incidentally. I have, however, drawn freely upon Graetz, Karpeles, Güdemann, Kayserling, and Steinschneider, and have given them due credit in the Notes. The *Jewish Encyclopedia* was of special service to me, particularly in matters of biography, and I consulted the references whenever possible.

## CHAPTER I

### SECULAR POETRY: THIRTEENTH TO FIFTEENTH CENTURIES

Mediæval Hebrew poetry which had its origin in Jose b. Jose at the end of the sixth century was, for the most part, of a religious nature. Religious poetry always precedes secular poetry; and, with an essentially religious people like the Jews, and with a life of almost constant martyrdom which they were called upon to lead, it was but natural that their longings and aspirations, their woes and hopes, should find expression in religious songs, subsequently adopted into the liturgy. The development of secular poetry, an offspring of periods of ease and leisure, and an indication of a higher standard of civilization when a differentiation between things sacred and profane is already definitely fixed, was possible only in Spain. Born out of the exigencies of the bitter controversy between Dunash ben Labraṭ and Menahem b. Saruk and their disciples in the tenth century, introducing the panegyric in honor of Ibn Shaprut on the one hand, and the satire directed against one another by the combatants themselves, secular poetry made rapid strides in Spain. In the eleventh

and twelfth centuries we find it an integral part of the works of Ibn Gabirol, Samuel Hanagid, the Ibn Ezras, and Judah Halevi; until, in Ḥarizi, it found its highest and final expression. In Italy, however, where the state of general culture was much lower than it was in Spain, particularly in Mohammedan Spain, we find no attempt at secular poetry until the middle of the thirteenth century. Liturgical poetry flourished in Italy already in the tenth century (Zunz, *Literaturgeschichte der Synagogalen Poesie*, 104 ff.), and has a continuous history of nearly eight centuries. But the first Italian Hebrew poet who introduced a non-religious subject into Italian Hebrew poetry was Benjamin b. Abraham Anaw,<sup>1</sup> a Roman physician and prolific liturgical poet,<sup>2</sup> who wrote *משא ניא חוין*,<sup>3</sup> a satirical poem directed against the arrogance of the wealthy and the nobility, and *שערי עץ חיים*,<sup>4</sup> a rimed treatise on practical ethics. The latter poem consists of sixty-three stanzas in alphabetical order (omitting the letter ו and ט), each stanza containing a complete moral maxim, the acrostic Benjamin forming the opening and closing lines.

<sup>1</sup> Of the family Degli Mansi or Piatelli (Zunz, *Literaturgeschichte*, 352); *מהענינים* dei Pietosi, Mortara, *Indice*; also called Benjamin Fanti (Zunz, *Zur Geschichte*, 280); Fonte or Ponte *קובץ על יד* I (Berlin 1885), 74, note; *בנימין מפנסו* 'ר Dukes, *Annalen*, I, 84. The metrical Epilogue to the *Bet Middot*, the ethical work of Jehiel b. Jekuthiel b. Benjamin Anaw of Rome (1278) published by Gudemann (*Geschichte des Erziehungswesens und der Cultur der Juden in Italien*, note XII, pp. 327-8) is written in the style and the spirit of Benjamin Anaw's *שערי עץ חיים*. Was Jehiel a grandson of our Benjamin?

<sup>2</sup> Zunz, *Literaturgeschichte*, 352-5; Landshuth, *Amude ha-Avodah*, 51.

<sup>3</sup> Riva di Trento 1560; in M. Wolf's *Zemiroth Israel*, Lemberg 1859. It is written in rimed prose. Is this the work that Immanuel refers to in the twenty-third chapter of the *Maḥberet* (Berlin edition, 1796, 206) with so much derision and contempt? This work is erroneously ascribed to Benjamin Ashkenazi by Fürst, *Bib. Jud.*, I, 116.

<sup>4</sup> *קובץ על יד* I (Berlin 1885), 71 ff.

There is, however, no originality of thought in the poem, since it is a mere paraphrase of biblical and rabbinic moral sayings; and, stylistically, it is rather commonplace, "*ohne Salz*," to quote Dukes (Jost's *Annalen*, I, 84). There is a total absence of meter, though the diction of the poem is biblical and simple. The artificiality of the title (each stanza is a "gate," the last line of which contains a biblical phrase ending in "*hayyim*") is in keeping with the conceits of the time.

Mediocre as was Anaw's attempt at secular poetry, the beginning was made; and the time was soon ripe for the appearance of a consummate artist and poet who was to raise secular Hebrew poetry in Italy to its zenith of splendor. The glorious era of Italian literature soon set in, the period of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio. The stirring of a sense of art and poetry as a result of Dante's *Divina Commedia*, and the Revival of Learning led by Petrarch and Boccaccio brought about a general awakening on the part of the Italian people to the beauty of the classic literatures; and the birth of a national vernacular literature created an atmosphere of culture and a widespread intellectual ferment. This awakening naturally had its effect upon the Jews of Italy who formed an integral part of the population, and who had early identified themselves with the Italian language and culture (Güdemann, *Geschichte des Erziehungswesens und der Cultur der Juden in Italien*, 15). Moreover, the political condition of the Italian Jews during this period was a comparatively happy one, so that the poisoned shafts aimed against them by the Lateran Council (1215) fell almost harmlessly upon them. The preoccupation of the Popes with their ambition to fasten their hold upon the temporal affairs of all Christendom; the internecine warfare waged

by the Colonnas and Orsinis, the Ghibellines and the Guelphs; the jealousies and intrigues of each petty State, Duchy, and Principality against its neighbors and against all the rest in that period of anarchy; the extensive commerce and the great commercial undertakings of the maritime republics, with the consequent prosperity, in which the Italian Jews took an active and prominent part; all these tended to detract attention from the Jews, and to permit them to follow their pursuits and undertakings in comparative peace and security, so that some of them reached a high degree of wealth and influence. The close commercial intercourse between Jews and non-Jews in Italy led a close personal acquaintance, and to a feeling of mutual respect and confidence. The general prosperity and the freedom from disturbance and persecution which the Jews of Italy enjoyed enabled them to absorb the more readily the refining and humanizing influences of the new movement and to devote themselves with a greater zeal and a larger outlook to their own literature. The study of the Talmud received a great impetus through the efforts of the three Trans; philosophy found a warm friend in Hillel b. Samuel (1220-1295), the ardent champion of Maimonides, and a still more outspoken advocate in Zerahiah b. Shealtiel Hen, the Aristotelian rationalist; and there was hardly a Jewish scholar who was not acquainted with the science and the philosophy of the day. The example of Robert of Anjou who was a great admirer of Jewish literature, and a patron of the arts and the sciences, was not without its influence upon Jewish men of power and wealth. Like the Italian dukes and nobles, many Jewish princes of commerce played the part of Maecenas, encouraging Jewish scholars, grammarians, and rhetoricians, and enabling them materially to devote them-

selves undisturbed to their literary pursuits.<sup>5</sup> Amidst this general intellectual activity, secular Hebrew poetry likewise revived, and found its highest expression in the inimitable Immanuel of Rome (c. 1270-1330).

Immanuel was to the Hebrew literature of Italy what Dante was to the Italian literature. Contemporaries and personal friends (Güdemann, *l. c.*, 137 ff.), Immanuel and Dante resemble each other in their uniqueness. Fundamentally differing in temperament—Dante somber, serious, gloomy, Immanuel cheerful, joyous, light-hearted—but each a master in his own field, these two poets stand in their respective literatures alone, unapproachable, supreme. Immanuel, combining the light, airy, inconsequential attitude of mind characteristic of sunny Italy, with the shrewd, keen, observant sense of humor characteristic of the Jew, is the satirist and humorist *par excellence* of the entire Hebrew literature. A supreme master of Hebrew diction and style, thoroughly at home in all Jewish as well as in the Italian and classic literature, Immanuel gave the most ingenious and final expression to that peculiarly mediæval Hebrew anomaly, the so-called mosaic style. With marvelous facility he borrows ready-made biblical and talmudic phrases, gathers them from all the four corners of the vast Jewish literature, places them side by side, member to member, bone to bone, his remarkable genius breathes into them the spirit of life, and, behold, they stand before the reader a brilliant array palpitating with life and thought. There is no incongruity in this massing together of widely scattered phrases; each phrase seems to fit perfectly into every other phrase resulting in a perfect whole, a unit. Moreover, in Immanuel the Hebrew muse assumed a brilliantly cheerful, even frivolous and erotic aspect.

<sup>5</sup> See Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, VII, 258-275.

Spanish Hebrew poets, indeed, had sung of wine and of love, but in a reflective, chaste, and serious mood. Immanuel, however, abandons himself to the love of life, the joy of living, and the natural gaiety and buoyancy of his Italian temperament. He can be serious at times, even sad, solemn, and prayerful; but his sense of cheerfulness and humor asserts itself inevitably. At times he gives way to sentiments and expressions that must have scandalized the more serious-minded of his contemporaries, were it not for the happy, ingenious way in which they are couched. Genius covers a multitude of offenses. The last chapter of his *Maḥberet* which is an imitation of Dante, and which lacks the vigor and brilliancy of his other work, only confirms the fact that Immanuel was original, and the humorist above all.

Immanuel speaks of contemporary poets (מלִיצֵי וּחְכָמֵי מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל הַזֶּמֶן, רומי *Maḥberet*, VI), and one, Judah Siciliano, he praises very highly as a master of verse and style (*ibid.*, XIII), of whose works, however, nothing has been preserved. The other poets of the period referred to by Immanuel were liturgical poets.<sup>6</sup> Kalonymos b. Kalonymos, the Provençal, was, indeed, greatly influenced by the brilliant Roman. His *Maseket Purim*, as Graetz pointed out (*Gesch. d. Juden*, VII, 264, n. 1), was certainly written in Rome, whither his duties at the court of Robert of Naples had led him about 1317-1322; even his *Eben Boḥan*, a satire in rimed prose, may have been conceived and partly written in Rome,<sup>7</sup> though it was not finished in Italy. But Kalonymos, while possessing a clear, incisive style, cannot lay much claim to the name of poet; and as a Provençal, the study of his work belongs elsewhere.

<sup>6</sup> Güdemann, *l. c.*, 145.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 47, note; Graetz, VII, 262, note 1.



Otherwise, Immanuel had no imitators or immediate successors. Hebrew poetry in Italy follows a parallel course with Italian poetry. Just as after the first outburst of Italian genius in the fourteenth century, the era of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, a period of almost complete barrenness set in until Lorenzo de Medici and Politian re-awakened the Italian lyre, so after the death of Immanuel in 1330, no Hebrew poet arose in Italy until, almost a century later, Moses da Rieti attempted to imitate Dante. Immanuel, highly appreciated in his own time, was neglected later on. The levity of his tone, the frivolity, often the irreverence, of his expressions, and, above all, the erotic note which prevails in his verse, did ill accord with the mood of gloom and despair in which Jewry all over Christendom was plunged in the following centuries. Still, while the mode of his thinking and the general tendency of his *Maḥberet* did not exert a great influence upon Hebrew poetry, his brilliant style did. Subsequent rhetoricians quote him as an authority, and aspiring poets read his works eagerly, and take him as a model. The versification of the *Maḥberet* is still that of the Arabic-Spanish school, but Immanuel has the distinction of being the first to introduce into Hebrew poetry the sonnet-form which Guittone de Arezzo had just transferred from the Provençal into the Italian. Thus Immanuel, the representative *par excellence* of mediævalism in its best sense, unconsciously paved the way for freedom from the bondage of Arabic prosody which held sway ever since the ninth century.

Moses b. Isaac da Rieti of Perugia (1388-1460), physician and philosopher, and master of both Hebrew and Italian, began his MIKDASH ME'AT (*Little Shrine*) in

1416.\* Of its two parts, altogether consisting of 1402 terzets, the first part, ULAM (*Entrancè*), of five cantos, is an introduction to the history of Jewish literature, and a review of the most important systems of philosophy up to the time of Maimonides. The second part, HEKAL (*The Temple*), of eight cantos, is devoted to a description of the place where dwell the heroes and the great ones of Israel. It must have been the poet's intention, as Goldenthal suggested, to have the poem consist of three parts, ULAM, HEKAL, and DEBIR, to correspond to Dante's three divisions. As the writing of the poem was extended over a long period of years, it was not completed, for reasons unknown. Even the second part seems to be unfinished. The poem betrays Rieti's intimate knowledge of Hebrew literature, and his close acquaintance with philosophy, inasmuch as he leads in review all the Tannaim, Amoraim, and Geonim, up to his own day, and the leading Greek, Arabic, and Jewish philosophers. While not of much value as a poem (for the most part only a rimed chronicle, as Karpeles suggests, *Geschichte der Jüdischen Literatur*, 1886, II, 745), it is not without its critical value. Rieti found it necessary to exclude from his paradise Immanuel of Rome "because he sang of love" (*Mikdash Me'at*, 106a) (for which, as Graetz wittily remarks, Immanuel should have been thankful, because he would have found Rieti's *Eden* exceedingly tedious), as well as several Jewish philosophers, such as Isaac Albalag, Levi b. Gerson, Moses Narboni (p. 102b, n. 3), as heretics, and an unknown Spanish writer, Mustin de Huerara, because "he wrote against the Kabbalah." In his old age Rieti's attitude towards the study of philosophy seems to have undergone a com-

\* Edited and published by I. Goldenthal, Vienna 1851. On Rieti see Goldenthal's Introduction to the *Mikdash Me'at*, and Graetz, VIII, 157-9.

plete change. It is said that he gave himself up entirely to the Kabbalah, even expressing a regret that he had ever occupied himself with philosophic pursuits.

That Rieti's work was held in high esteem in his own day, is attested by the fact that Italian communities adopted some of his poems into the ritual (Canto 2 of *Hekal*, divided into seven parts, one for each day of the week), and read portions thereof daily. Deborah Ascarelli and Lazaro Viterbo deemed some of his hymns worthy of being translated into Italian. However, he surely does not deserve the extravagant praise bestowed upon him by Delitzsch and Goldenthal, and, least of all, the honorable designation of the "Hebrew Dante." In fact, he lacked not only the depth, the power of imagination, and the sublimity of Dante, but there is a total absence of poetic feeling in his lines, with the exception of a few stanzas of Cantos I and II of the *HEKAL*. In the formation of his stanza, and the easy flow of his rimes, he is indeed very happy; and he helped further to wean Hebrew poetry away from the Spanish-Arabic monotonous rime-ending by introducing the *terza rima* so effectively employed by Dante.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, he refused "to play with biblical verses," a misuse of the Bible so characteristic of his contemporaries. Intrinsically, however, his diction is often uncouth, and he betrays an absence of poetic appreciation by many conceits and puerilities.

Of Rieti's contemporaries only one, Solomon da Piena (lived early in the fifteenth century), is mentioned as the author of a short clever Purim epigram (Steinschneider, "Purim und Parodie," *Zeitschrift für Geschichte des*

<sup>9</sup> Like Dante's, Rieti's lines contain ten syllables, counting a *shewa mobile* as a syllable; but while Dante's rimes are feminine, Rieti's are masculine. Rieti employs the term "*Regel*" for poetic "foot."

*Judenthums*, 1903, 173). Moses Ibn Ḥabib (died at the beginning of the sixteenth century), a native of Lisbon which he left before the expulsion, living for a time in the Levant, finally settling in Southern Italy, is by far the most important of Rieti's immediate successors. A grammarian, translator, and philosopher, his treatise on Hebrew prosody *DARKE NO'AM* (*Ways of Pleasantness*), written in Bitonto, Apulia, in 1486, is a lucid and valuable contribution to the science of poetics and to Hebrew poetry itself. Based upon Aristotle's *Poetics*, but modified to suit the peculiarities of Hebrew poetry,<sup>10</sup> he lays down ten rules of prosody, illustrating each form of verse and meter by original poems. There is, indeed, little poetic feeling in his lines. In style, he is often homonymic and stilted, twisting biblical phrases and proper names out of their context in order to give an ingenious and witty turn to his verse. Such, however, was the norm of Spanish Hebrew poetry, and he is characteristically a Spaniard, designating himself *SEPHARDI* with evident pride (*Darke No'am*, p. 4, Roedelheim edition, 1806; likewise at the beginning of the introduction to his Commentary on *בחינת עולם*, Ferrara 1552). As a stylist, according to the standard of his day, he is a master, and as a versifier, he is perfect. There is a swing and a rhythm to his opening poem (3-4a) for instance, that are very graceful. His thoughts are not above mediocrity, and his language is frequently so idiomatic as to be untranslatable. The charm of his verse consists in the cleverness of the style, not in the originality of thought. Thus:

<sup>10</sup> He maintains that rime had been employed already in biblical times, and tells of the rimed inscription which he saw on a tombstone in Valencia supposedly that of the general of Amaziah, King of Judah. This inscription proves to Ibn Ḥabib the antiquity of Hebrew rime. Azariah dei Rossi refutes this theory in chapter 60 of his *מאור עינים*.

אם אשתך רעה ולא תשמע לקול  
 שיחך לשרתך ורע חורשת;  
 דע כי במקל עז לפרה סודרה  
 תִּשְׁיֵר תלמיה והיא חורשת.

The pun is on חורשת.<sup>11</sup>

The tone of levity affected towards woman as indicated in the above quotation from Ḥabib, is not isolated. There is quite a number of poets towards the end of the fifteenth century who discussed woman, in the abstract, be it stated, and a fierce battle *pro* and *con* is waged. Thus, about 1492, Abraham da Sarteano wrote his SONE NASHIM<sup>12</sup> (*Misogynist*), a poem consisting of 50 terzets of ten syllables each,<sup>13</sup> which is a fierce arraignment of woman. Women, in his opinion, are the cause of all the mischief existing in the world. Eve made Adam lose paradise, and the poet cites a long list of women from the Bible and the classic and contemporary Italian literatures who have brought down misfortune upon man. The language of the poem is simple and clear, without frills, though not forcible, and shows the influence of contemporary Italian literature though not of the best type. On the other hand, Abigdor da Fano in MAGEN NASHIM (*Letterbode*, X, 101-3) joins issue with Sarteano, and takes up the cudgel in behalf of the fair sex. He cites the many noble women of history, such as Jael, Esther, and Judith, and pays a graceful tribute to a lady of his acquaintance, married to a gentleman of Pisa, who is her "husband's crown." His

<sup>11</sup> On Ḥabib see *Jewish Encyclopedia*, s. v.; Karpeles, *Geschichte d. Jüdischen Literatur*, II, 875 ff.

<sup>12</sup> Published by Neubauer in *Letterbode*, X, 98-101. On the entire subject see Steinschneider, *Zur Frauenliteratur*.

<sup>13</sup> In his introduction to the poem (*Letterbode*, X, 98), he uses the phrase רגלים " for ten feet, counting the *shewa mobile* as a syllable like Rieti.

poem also consists of 50 terzets, after the model of Sar-teano, and like his, it is clear but lacking in vigor. Elijah Ḥayyim b. Benjamin da Genzano<sup>14</sup> comes to the defense of Abraham Sarteano whom he calls a great rhetorician (מליין נורא). Good women are the exception, he maintains in MELIZOT (*Letterbode*, X, 104-5); and rails at Fano for daring to champion the cause of women even the best of whom such as Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, and Leah were guilty of grievous offenses. Of Fano's poem as such he speaks with contempt as written against the rules of Hebrew prosody, and as intrinsically "full of lies and vanity." Genzano is evidently a younger man than either of the other two, as indicated by the opening lines of the poem באשר הייתי בימי הרפי. The MELIZOT contain 38 terzets and one additional line which would indicate that the poem is incomplete, the poet very likely intending to write 50 terzets as his predecessors did (Steinschneider, *Zur Frauenliteratur*, 62). An anonymous poet in TESHUBAH LE-MAGEN NASHIM (*Letterbode*, XI, 62-65); likewise defends Abraham Sarteano's position as against Abigdor da Fano. Finally, Daniel b. Samuel of Rossena (Mortara, *Indice*: Daniel b. Samuel Rofo b. Samuel Dayyan), on the first of Nisan 1492, in a poem of 50 terzets steps into the fray, and settles the quarrel by rebuking the combatants for taking up such a delicate subject at all. On the mooted question itself he is non-committal, which proves the diplomat. His poem opens and closes with a five line acrostic of his name, Daniel (*Letterbode*, XI, 65-68; Steinschneider, *Zur Frauenliteratur*, 57).<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> He is also the author of a satire on Christianity written after the model of יגדל in Don David Nasi's הוראת בעל דין, edited by Jacob Sopher, Frankf. a. M. 1866. I have not seen it.

<sup>15</sup> A quatrain and five-lined acrostic on a Purim King named Eliezer written by Daniel of Rossena are quoted by Steinschneider, in "Purim

The fact that Daniel of Rossena manifests astonishment that such men discussed a subject of this nature would indicate that these poets were men of standing, and certainly men of learning. The very choice of the subject and the selection of the *terza rima* as the form show the influence upon them of contemporary Italian literature. These poets, however, evince no originality either of thought or expression. They were mere rimesters. The decay of the Italian Hebrew poetry of the fifteenth century cannot be more strikingly illustrated than by a comparison of the work of these verse-makers with that of Immanuel on this very subject.

## CHAPTER II

### POETS OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

The decline of true poetry, as indicated by Rieti and more strongly emphasized by his successors, continued through the first half of the sixteenth century. In other departments of intellectual activity Italian Jews took a prominent part, made possible, indeed, by the comparatively secure political condition of Italian Jewry which was, as yet, undisturbed. Jehiel of Pisa, in the last two decades of the fifteenth century, controlled the money market of Tuscany. Jews were the leading physicians, and were employed not only by the nobility and royalty, but even by the princes of the church and by the Popes themselves, in spite of the decree of the Council of Beziers (May, 1246). Moreover, the Humanists, as a result of the revival of interest in antiquity, began to turn their attention also to the study of Hebrew and Jewish literature, especially the

und Parodie" (*Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums*, XL, 174), and by Dr. Israel Davidson in his *Parody in Jewish Literature*, p. 27.

Kabbalah, and to Jewish Arabic philosophy. To accomplish the first, they needed Jewish teachers; to accomplish the second purpose, Jewish translators. Such eminent scholars as Pico della Mirandola, Cardinal Egidio de Viterbo, and Cardinal Domenico Grimani sat at the feet of Jewish scholars. This interest in Jewish studies naturally brought the best spirits among Jews and Christians in close and intimate contact, and led many Jews to a participation in the humanistic movement. Jewish youths attended Italian universities, spoke Italian, and wrote both Italian and Latin. With the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, many Spanish Jews found refuge in Italy, whither they introduced their own, higher culture, which reacted favorably upon the Jews of Italy, and added to their intellectual ferment. Italian Jews were the first to take advantage of the invention of printing, and Hebrew presses were established in Mantua, Ferrara, Bologna, Soncino, Naples, and other places. Already in the second half of the fifteenth century, Messer Leon (Judah b. Jehiel), physician as well as rabbi of Mantua, and a classic scholar, wrote a Hebrew Rhetoric (NOFER ZUFIM), comparing the Hebrew with the classic languages, and advocated the study of the classic literatures; and Elias del Medigo taught philosophy not only to Jews, in his BEHINAT HA-DAT, but above all to non-Jews, at Padua and Florence, and was called upon by the University of Padua to decide a philosophic dispute which divided the professors and students thereof into two contending parties. In the sixteenth century, we find David Ibn Jahia teaching Talmud and Hebrew grammar in Naples, under the patronage of the famous Samuel Abrabanel and his wife Benvenida Abrabanela; Judah and his son Abraham Menz are at the head of the great Talmudic and Rabbinic school at Padua;



Abraham Farissol (1458-1525) of Ferrara is occupying himself with Geography (IGGERET ORHOT 'OLAM); Jacob Mantin, physician to Pope Paul III, is translating from Hebrew and Arabic into Latin works on medicine and metaphysics; and Abraham de Balmes (c. 1450-c. 1503, of Lecce), physician to and friend of Cardinal Domenico Grimani, and especially Elias Levita (1469-1549) of Rome, teacher of Cardinal Viterbo and other eminent Christians, are busying themselves with the study of Hebrew grammar; while Azariah dei Rossi was about to revolutionize Jewish science with his deep and keen sense of criticism, thus opening up a new and vast field for Jewish scholarship.

Amidst so much literary and intellectual activity we might reasonably expect to meet with at least a few poetic spirits, if not of the towering greatness of an Immanuel—supreme geniuses are produced at rare intervals—, at least of the class of Petrarchists, imitators, shining by reflected glory. Yet in the first half of the sixteenth century we look in vain for even one poet. It is especially strange that, since Jews spoke and wrote Italian, Ariosto and the younger Tasso should have exerted no influence whatever upon their Hebrew contemporaries. The influence of the Petrarchists, who were mostly lyric poets, should have been of special service to Jewish singers who cared to pour forth their souls in laments and dirges which are necessarily lyric. Still no poet appeared to sing the songs of Zion. This lack of poetic productivity may be partly ascribed to the absorption of the Jewish scholars, to which group the poets usually belonged, in the first half of the sixteenth century, in talmudic, rabbinic, philosophic, and grammatical pursuits to the exclusion of everything else. At any rate, all that has come down to us from this period is a few rimes, not deserving the name of poetry. Israel

of Cortina, in the tenor of Abraham Sarteano, wrote at Sienna, in 1530, a poem on woman under the name of תוכחת נשים (published by Neubauer in *Letterbode*, XI, 88-92), consisting of eighty-four decasyllabic terzets, with two quatrains as a conclusion. Though he does not mention Sarteano and his fellow combatants, their work must have been known to him. The employment of *terza rima*, as Steinschneider suggested (*Zur Frauenliteratur*), is not accidental, but rather in imitation of his predecessors. On the whole, the poet is a misogynist, though he admits that there are some noble women, and happy indeed is the man to whose lot a good woman falls. The poet confined his remarks to biblical women, acknowledging that he was not acquainted either with non-Jewish women or with non-Jewish books, "since all their doings were of no value":

לא מימי קראתי ספריהן  
להבין ולהשביל אשר עשו  
כי תהו ובהו כל עסקיהן.

On the whole, this poem is of a piece with that of his predecessors, lacking both vigor and wit. Elias Levita is more serious and ambitious; but, great as is his merit as a grammarian, he had a very poor conception of the function of poetry, or he would not have undertaken the impossible task of writing a poetic grammar! While, to do him justice, his PEREK SHIRAH, the first part of PIRKE ELIJAH (Soncino 1520), was intended merely as a mnemonic, the very conception of such an attempt proves that he had eyes only for form and cared nothing for true poetic thought and feeling. One specimen of these *songs* will suffice:

"And now I sing a glorious song  
In words explicit, plain;  
And of the vowels ten will speak

That part in classes twain:  
 And five of these are giant tall,  
 And five like pigmies small."

(Song 2, p. 48*b*, second edition, Venice 1546).

Truly poetic figures, these, for the long and short vowels! His versification, moreover, is all after the Jewish-Spanish model, and has therefore no special value even from the point of view of form, though it may have served its purpose as a mnemonic. Moses Provençale, rabbi of Mantua (1503-1577), took Levita as his model, and wrote another poetic grammar, entirely in the spirit of the *PIRKE ELIJAH*, under the title of *BE-SHEM QADMON* (*In the Name of an Ancient*; not *BOSEM QADMON, An Ancient Blossom*, as read erroneously by Delitzsch). This poem was written in 1535, and published in Venice in 1597 (Fürst, *Bibl. Jud.*, s. v.).

The second half of the sixteenth century, however, was more productive of poetic efforts. The burning of the Talmud in the papal states and other Italian cities by order of Pope Julius III (Sept. 9, 1553) called forth a cry of despair from Mordecai b. Judah de Blanes,<sup>16</sup> and Jacob b.

<sup>16</sup> Mordecai de Blanes' elegy on the burning of the Talmud is published in the *החלוקי*, XIII, 109, and consists of 27 monorimes, written in the style characteristic of *קינות*. His elegy on the Ancona martyrs used to be recited by the community of Pesaro on the ninth of Ab, but is not extant (Graetz, IX, 344, 3). Ḥazzan's *kinah* was published in the *לבנון*, V, 343 (I have not been able to obtain a copy of it). Fano's elegy was published at Ferrara, 1556 (Steinschneider, *C.B.*, 5528; Fürst, *Bibl. Jud.*), in his *Shilte ha-Gibborim*, and reprinted in the *REJ.*, XI, 154 ff., by D. Kaufmann. There seems, however, to be some confusion as to the authorship of this *kinah*. Kaufmann, in the article just quoted, thinks that, of the 47 *terse rime*, stanzas 1-30 were written by Fano, while the remaining seventeen, commemorating the burning of the Talmud in 1553, belong to an anonymous poet. On the other hand, Isaac Raphael Ashkenazi, rabbi of Ancona, in *תולדות בני ישראל*, 13-18 (Cracow 1901), reprints the same poem (44

Joab Elijah da Fano of Bologna and Ferrara; and the martyrdom of the twenty-four Marannos at Ancona by order of Pope Paul IV (May, 1556)—a tragedy which shocked all Jewry throughout Europe—stirred the above named poets and Solomon Hazzan, to commemorate that terrible event in their respective קינות which, however, are rather weak, and not at all commensurate with the enormity of the outrage. About the same time, woman again received her share of attention on the part of a number of poets, and the merry, rather bloodless, battle raged about her. Judah (Leon) Sommo da Porta-Leone of Bologna, a pupil of da Fano, and a close friend of Azariah dei Rossi, in answer to attacks on woman, probably by the anonymous author of DABAR BE-ITTO (*Letterbode*, X, 114), came to her defense in a poem MAGEN NASHIM (about 1556) in which he protests against the woman-hater, quoting the names of noble women mentioned in the Bible and other literature, concluding with a glowing description of the charms of a lady whom he does not mention by name, only intimating that she lived in Bologna (Hannah Rieti, wife of Reuben Sullam; Karpeles, *Gesch. der Jüd. Lit.*, II, 840). His friend and compatriot Jacob da Fano mentioned above, replied with a collection of poems under

*terze rime*), and speaks of it as ascribed to Mordecai de Blanes, and as read in Ancona on the ninth of Ab (p. 13). Judging from the fact that de Blanes did not employ the *terza rima* in his elegy on the Talmud, while Fano uses it in all his poems, it is probable that Fano was the author of the *kinah*. According to Kaufmann (*REJ.*, XI, 150-51) this *kinah* was probably confiscated and burned at the instigation of Cardinal Ghislieri who, on Feb. 4, 1559, complained to the Duke of Ferrara of a book written in praise of the Marannos "who were justly burned," and sought to punish both the author and the printer. This poem, while of slight literary value, is of great historic importance, since it gives the names of the martyrs, and establishes the historicity of the *autos-da-fé* which some church historians were attempting to deny (Graetz, XI, 344, n. 3).

the name of *SHILTE HA-GIBBORIM*,<sup>17</sup> the most important of which consists of sixty terzets. He acknowledges the greatness and glory of woman; only that man was intended by God to be of prime importance. Good-naturedly he rails at Leon Portaleone ascribing his advocacy of woman's cause to youthful inexperience. Da Fano acknowledges that he knows of woman only from hear-say, that he was always afraid of woman, but since the Bible and all other literatures agree that women have been the cause of man's downfall more than once, and, as the Biblical examples alone are sufficient to illustrate his argument, his position concerning woman's inferiority is sustained. On the whole, there is little cleverness and still less humor in the poem. An anonymous poet discusses the same question in the form of a dialogue of thirty-six terzets between Jacob and Deborah, and criticises both Portaleone and Fano and is really the cleverest and most logical. Deborah argues that in lowering the dignity of woman man is lowering his own dignity, and takes Jacob to task for hating woman, since God made woman to be man's helpmate. Jacob, driven to the wall, replies:

אוי לי (מי לא יצעק) עזרה מצר,  
 כי לתת מוהר לכל בנותי  
 לא יספיק בביתי הון ואוצר.

"Who would not cry for help? O woe is me!  
 Of daughters I have plenty, but have not  
 The means to give to each a dowry!"

<sup>17</sup> Neubauer, *Letterbode*, X, 124-33; *REJ.*, XI, 154-5; Neppi-Ghirondi, *תולדות גדולי ישראל*, Triest, 1853, 210; Steinschneider, *Zur Frauen-literatur*, 66; and C. B. Fuenn, *Kneset Israel*, s. v.; Mortara, *Indice*, 21. Mortara's reference to Abraham Portaleone's *Shilte ha-Gibborim*, 106, is erroneous; it should read p. 185b, where Portaleone speaks of himself as a pupil of Jacob Fano's in Talmud and Posekim.

And the war of words is thus ended. (Steinschneider, *Zur Frauenliteratur*, 73-75).

That men of the standing of Jacob da Fano, rabbinical scholars of high attainments, should engage in such trivial discussions, and should speak of women in such a tone of levity apparently taking the matter seriously, since there is a total absence of wit and humor in their discussion, is really astonishing. It simply shows the influence of their environment, "an echo of the romantic poetry of the Renaissance which spread the cult of the beautiful also among the Jews" (Karpeles, II, 840), though judging from the absence of taste and refinement, they absorbed only its grosser qualities. Happily, these were the exceptions. The other poets of the period were men of deeper thought, of finer sensibility, and of a truer appreciation of the scope of poetry.

The two foremost Italian scholars of the sixteenth century, Azariah dei Rossi (1513 or 14-1578), and Judah (Leon) Moscato, both of Mantua, as was usual with all rabbis and scholars, also tried their hands at poetry. While not great poets, the difference between their works and those of the scribblers who preceded them is sufficiently striking. Dei Rossi, a man of universal culture, physician, historian, archæologist, and rabbinic scholar, interspersed his epoch-making work *ME'OR 'ENAYIM* (Mantua 1573-75) with six poems. The clearness, vigor, and naturalness of his prose are enhanced in his poetic lines, and indicate the ease, the grace, and the mastery of style of which dei Rossi is capable. He is not altogether free from the artificialities and artifices employed by the stylists of his time; his lines are monorimes, following the Spanish-Arabic fashion; but they are lucid and vigorous. The introductory and the concluding poems of *IMRE BINAH*, in the

nature of prayers, are bold and defiant to the enemies of light and truth. He is conscious of the merits of his work, and throws down the gauntlet to the hypocrites and fools who condemn him:

ואפס — עם פתאים או צבועים  
 והעומים מעילי הכחשים  
 ברית אכרות לבלתי יגעו בו  
 הלא הם ישכחו כנחשים,  
 בשגם יהרום הוא מלתעותם  
 בעז משפט ואמרי פיו לחשים.

(*Imre Binah*, c. 60).

Elegant is his address to the reader in the third introductory poem to the same work:

הן נטעתי נפש זכה  
 נטעי מדע כדמות גנה  
 בואי וקחי כטוב לך  
 איזה פרי או שושנה.  
 ובהשיגך דבר נחמד  
 רק לאלהים פצחי רנה  
 כי הוא נותן לקנות חכמה  
 עוז ולחבין אמרי בינה.

“A soul serene I planted here,  
 And knowledge-seeds within this field;  
 At leisure come and pluck at will,  
 And may it fruits and roses yield.  
 And if a pleasant thing you find  
 Then praises sing unto the Lord:  
 For He it is who wisdom gives,  
 And He the understanding word.”

The assurance of faith is expressed in the epitaph which he composed on himself:

מן ים סערות הן אלי החוף  
באתי ומה קדים אשר אירא,  
אשחק ללהפוכות זמן אכזב  
לא יהמה עוד לי אלי זרא;  
יקשה בסחרי אם יהי רצוי  
לשר אשר לכל בשם יקרא  
אך הוא בראני ולא אחסר  
חסדו שהוא מפליא לכל נברא.

"From out the stormy sea unto the shore  
I came, and fear the hurricane no more;  
I laugh at lying Time's upheavals, I  
His strange perverse mirages do defy.  
It may go hard with my account if He  
Who nameth all so please to deal with me:  
He is my God, and even I will share  
The lavish grace He scatters everywhere."

(*ibid.*).<sup>18</sup>

Judah (Leon) Moscato (died before 1594) who, like dei Rossi is a child of the Renaissance, the commentator of Halevi's *Kuzari*, and whose NEFUZOT JEHUDAH (*Venice* 1588) is as epoch-making in the field of homiletics as dei Rossi's is in that of historic criticism, also

<sup>18</sup> He is said to have been informed in a dream of the exact day of his death which prophecy he reduced to the following quatrain:

על משכבי שוהה, כסליו שין למד הא  
נדמה לי אומר הא, לך עוד שלוש שנים  
לכן כסלו ש"ל"ח רוחי אל על יצלה  
אנא רב טוב סלח, תשלג צלמון שנים.

The genuineness of the composition of the above quatrain is vouched for by Leon de Modena who claims to have had a copy of it in dei Rossi's handwriting. According to Modena, the dream came true. S. D. Luzzatto saw the lines in an old manuscript (S. J. Rapoport in *Kerem Chemed*, V, 159-63, and I. Broyde in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*).



tried his hand at verse-writing. Like dei Rossi's, his lines are elegant and finished, though more stilted, and not so flexible. The poems that have come down to us are elegies, one on Samuel Cases, one on Joseph Caro, and three on the Duchess Margarita of Savoy, who died September 15, 1574,<sup>19</sup> of which by far the strongest is that on Joseph Caro, composed of three sestets, containing some lyric touches. The three Savoy poems, a sonnet, an octave acrostic on Margarita, and a quatrain, hardly betray "the greatness of his pure, poetic soul," as his Hebrew biographer claims (Abba Apfelbaum, ספר תולדות הג' ר' יהודה מוסקאטו, 59). The first and second are well written, but with little spontaneity; while the third which is so artificially composed as to be read either forward or backward is unintelligible either way. His meter is that of the Spanish school.

A more spontaneous poet is Menaḥem b. Judah Loṇzano (died after 1610<sup>20</sup> in Jerusalem). A native of Italy, though spending the greater part of his life at Jerusalem, and visiting his native land every now and then, a poverty-stricken wanderer, this Masoretic scholar and lexicographer had a keen eye and a still keener pen. Wandering from place to place, he had many opportunities of observing the inner life of his people and the picture he paints is not at all an attractive one, though allowance must be made for poetic license in exaggeration. His poems are

<sup>19</sup> These poems are published in Abba Apfelbaum's scholarly biography of Leon Moscato (Drohobycz 1900), pp. 55-59. Apfelbaum's estimation of Moscato's poetic power is rather exaggerated. He refers to three elegies by Azariah dei Rossi in honor of the same Duchess (מאור עינים, ed. Cassel) and compares them with those of Moscato to the advantage of the latter. I do not recollect dei Rossi's poems referred to; nor have I at present a copy of Cassel's edition.

<sup>20</sup> In מנחת תוכחה (שתי ידות, 134a, Venice 1618) he says: וזה שנים חמש מאות ואילף וארבעים אשר חרב דבירי; hence 1610.

contained in the third, fourth, and fifth division of the first part of his chief work *SHTE YADOT* (*Two Hands* or *Two Parts*, divided into five "fingers" each).

His 'ABODAT MIKDASH (*Service of the Sanctuary*), the third "finger," consists of religious hymns some of which are so hopelessly Kaliric and obscure that we must thank the poet for his foresight in providing them with a commentary. At times, however, carried away by deep, fervent feelings, as he bewails the lot of his people, the poet forgets all labored conceits, and pours forth his soul in clear, vigorous lines that cannot but move the reader. The "Fourth Finger" *DEREK ḤAYYIM* (*Path of Life*, so called both because it is suggested by the verse ודרך חיים תוכחת מוסר, and also because the numerical value of ודרך חיים, 298, corresponds to the number of verses in the poem proper exclusive of the eight opening and nine closing lines), is a collection of moral sayings, a didactic poem intended as a guide for the young. It deals with all possible relations of life, teems with sound advice, the result of human experience, and its moral tone is very lofty. But the most important, because the most vivid, his *TOKHAḤAT MUSAR*, the "fifth finger," divided into fifteen cantos. In it he passes in panoramic review the characteristic foibles of his time, and arraigns his generation for their dereliction of duty. Thus he rails against the habits of swearing and of telling falsehoods which he calls a *מכת מדינה* (Canto III, line 40); against the desire to get rich quick (אין להעשיר, l. 57); against the negligence of the study of ritual laws, indulging in this piece of biting irony:

המוני יפתחו דלתות חנותם, וכל דלתי ספריו סגורי,  
ודי להם בתורת אָם ומצוה מלומדה ביד אשה ונערי,  
ודי להם כללים שבידם כצום כפור והשתכר בפורי,  
.....

"The doors of shops the crowds unlock,  
But lock secure the doors of books;  
Enough for them the mother's lore,  
And rites by women, tyros taught;  
Enough for them the common rules,  
Like Kippur's fast and Purim's drink."

לביבות עם גבינה בחנוכה, רקיקים בדבש, הדלק לגרי,  
ובפסח אכול מצה ומרור וחרוסת ולשבית את שארי,  
קנות יין ובשר מן יהודי, שמע לקרות בכל ערבי ושחרי;  
והתפלל בפיהו ולא בלבו . . . . .

"For Feast of Lights the noodles, cheese,  
The honey cakes, and candles lit;  
For Pesah Mazzot, bitter herbs,  
Haroset, leaven out of sight;  
Wine, meat must from a Jew be bought,  
The Shema' be read both morn and night,  
And pray with lip but not with heart."

(lines 63-65, 66-70). He denounces those who neglect מזוזות, who shave their beards, who wear high hats:

וישאו אנהבי רבם בראשם דמות כדור כעין שולי קדרי,

(line 90): who refuse to contribute to the support of scholars:

ואמור אומרים להם לכו נא, בלא כסף שברו ובלא מחירי,  
לעצמי לא אלמוד דת ותורה ומה חפצי לכלכל לאחרי,

(113-14); who judge a person by his dress and not according to his worth:

כפי מדי וכתנתי וכמעיל וצניף כן כבודי והדרי,  
אהה על דור יכבד בגדים ולו היו על סום ועירי,

"My glory, honor, all depend  
Upon my shirt and cloak and hat:  
Alas! An age that honors clothes  
Though worn by horse or ass!"

(lines 127-28). He protests against the lack of hospitality to the poor (Canto IX), ridicules the cantors:

ולא יצטרכו שום לב לבר קול שחל בקול שורי,  
.....

הלא בעי ללבא רחמנא ולא פומא בלא לבא דלישרי

"They need no heart at all; they need  
A voice, a lion's voice or bull's;  
But does not God a heart demand,  
And not a heartless shouting mouth?"

(lines 216, 229); and the extravagance of woman's dress (Canto XI). He condemns the absence of sympathy with the poor of Jerusalem:

ולא יאמין שבעי אל רעבי, ולא יאמין לרל שליו ובריא

(line 273); and scorns the younger generation for giving up the study of the Torah in order to devote themselves to business:

עזוב תורה, נטוש מצוה בני, לך קחה חנות, למד מסחר סחרי.

"Forsake the law, leave the commandments, son;  
Go get a shop, and learn the tradesman's art."

Aside from its intrinsic value as a fine work of satire, the poem throws light upon the social life of the Jewish people of his time. But one must not take Lonzano too literally. He doth protest too much. Possibly the poetic vagabond experienced some of the unpleasant things he describes, and he denounced his generation for the shortcomings of the few.

The last poet of this period is Samuel b. Elhanan Isaac Archevolti of Padua (died 1611). A grammarian like the others, he treats grammar in the prosaic manner its nature demands, and his prose is free and easy, a virtue rather rare in those days. But, in the thirty-first and thirty-second chapter of his 'ARUGAT HA-BOSEM (*A Bed of Spices*, Venice 1602) in which he treats of Prosody and Poetry, he proves himself if not a poet, at least a man capable of poetic appreciation. In chapter 31, he protests against the practice prevalent in his day of singing sacred songs of the liturgy to the tune of popular and often vulgar melodies,<sup>21</sup> which shows his sense of propriety. In Chapter 32, in treating of Prosody, he gives an elaborate account of the technique of versification, the structure of the meter and stanza, and their various forms. He emphasizes the necessity of proper accentuation, warns the reader against the reprehensible practice so common in mediæval Hebrew poetry of dividing a word at the end of a verse for the sake of the meter; and especially against the license of the Payyetanîm in forming nouns and verbs *ad libitum* out of biblical roots against all canons of grammar to the point of unintelligibility, and to the deterioration of the Hebrew language. The specimens of his own composition in illustration of the vari-

<sup>21</sup> This was a practice indulged in by Menaḥem Lonzano who set many of his hymns to "Arabic melodies because these, on account of their melancholy, were better adapted to arouse feelings of devotion and humility (*Shte Yadot*, 65b); or because they sound more solemn (*ibid.*, 142a). He is well aware of the fact that high authorities are opposed to the use of foreign melodies in religious worship, but he does not share their view. At the same time he objects most strenuously to the practice of imitating the sound of foreign words by means of Hebrew assonants. He condemns, for instance, the use of "*Shem Nora*" in imitation of the Italian song "*Signora*"; and he felt impelled to declare before God and Israel that he used foreign terms only to praise the Lord and not for profane or frivolous purposes (quoted from M. Schloessinger's article on Lonzano in the *J.E.*, *Shte Yadot*, p. 122a).

ous forms of meter and stanza are not of a high order of poetry, though they are written in a clear, often forcible biblical diction, and free from a slavish usage of ready-made biblical phrases. Some of his lines even betray lyric feeling and grace, and some of his epigrams are witty and clever, and sound quite modern, as, for instance, the following:

“When’er a bitter foe attack thee,  
Then sheathe thy sword, thy wrath restrain:  
For else will magistrates and lawyers  
Divide thy wealth, thy purse retain.”

(p. 119*a*). Law-suits in those days must have been considered as expensive as they are to-day, which proves that the sixteenth century was not so much behind us after all.

On the whole, Archevolti’s work is a marked progress over his contemporaries. While his meter is still governed by the Spanish-Arabic model, the formation of his stanzas, the place he gives to the sonnet as a recognized form of Hebrew versification, and, above all, his clear style, not altogether free from punning and conceits which, however, are used only rarely and not at all emphasized, show the influence of Italian literary forms, and point the road to his successors.

## CHAPTER III

### POETS OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

The seventeenth century marks the real period of transition in Italian Hebrew poetry. The beauty of diction and of form, the perfection of versification and the elegance of style so characteristic of the Italian literature of the sixteenth century, began at last to make themselves felt in Hebrew literature also. An attempt is made to do away

with the characteristically involved and complicated style of the middle ages, and to substitute a clear biblical diction instead. In the outward form of verse-building a complete revolution has taken place. The old, artificial monorime, with its still more artificial meter in which the half-vowel, the *Sheva*, plays such a prominent part, is replaced by the Italian meter, and its rich variety of stanza. The octave, the six line stanza, the quatrain, and *terza rima* are used quite extensively, and the sonnet has become not only recognized but a favorite form of versification. The scope of Hebrew poetry has also enlarged. While we find Abraham Samuel of Venice (died 1650) in his *SHIRAT DODI* (*The Song of My Beloved*, Venice 1719), undertaking the enormous task of reducing to rime the entire tractate Sabbath of the Babylonian Talmud; and, at the end of the century the brilliant young son of Moses b. Gerson, Gentile (Ḥefez) (1663-1711) Gerson, who died in 1700 at the age of seventeen, busying himself with giving poetic form to the 613 Commandments (*SHIR LE-TARYAG MIZWOT*), the theme of the poets of this period bears a closer relation to life, and its tone is more worldly. Even Gerson Ḥefez shows in his *YAD ḤARUZIM* (*Venice* 1700) which is a dictionary of rimes, a fine appreciation of poetry and poetic forms, and the octave he quotes from his father is elegant and finished. The poetry of this period is, of course, Jewish, and tinged with a religious coloring, but Joseph Carmi of Modena is the only religious poet of his time, and avowedly liturgical. The bulk of the poetry of the seventeenth century is philosophical, didactic, and polemic rather than religious. True poetic feeling is beginning to manifest itself. Not only have form and style made great strides, but two or three true poets appear on the horizon, and infuse into the poetry of the period the breath of life.

Leon de Modena, a pupil of Archevolti (Fürst, *Bibl. Jud.*, I, 383), who marks the period of transition from the sixteenth to the seventeenth century (April 23, 1571-March 27, 1648) is such a peculiar phenomenon, such a combination of strength and weakness, such a contradiction in himself, that he seems to have possessed a dual personality. A rabbinical scholar of great endowment, combining with it a mastery of the Hebrew, Italian, and Latin, he is now a bold skeptic, now a doughty champion of rabbinism, a scoffer at the Kabbalah and a writer of amulets, a member of the rabbinate and a passionate gambler. A preacher, a teacher, a rabbi, a merchant, a money-lender, a marriage-broker, and a cantor, he meets with failure in all his undertakings, ruined by his passion for gambling. A man of marvelous versatility, gifted with a keen power of expression in several languages, he also tried his hand at the only literary efforts that paid in those days—the writing of verses for special occasions. To quote Berliner: "He sang of everything that came his way, preferably when he was paid for it, so that he even immortalized a niggardly customer who failed to pay for an Epitaph."<sup>22</sup> He sang in honor of princes, bishops, scholars, men of prominence, authors and their works." But he specialized in wedding odes and epitaphs—occasions which no Italian Jew failed to grace with a poem, written by the interested parties when possible, or made to order by some one else. Most of these occasional poems of Modena's are still in manuscript, but

<sup>22</sup> This epitaph was written in honor of Simon Copio, father of the poetess Sarah Copia Sullam who died in 1606. The reference reads:

שלחתי שיר הזה      מעות איני חווה  
ולכל פועל ראוי      לתת את משכורתו.

Berliner, *Luhot Abanim*, 79; Soave in Geiger's *Jüd. Zeitschrift*, VII, 182.



the collection of epitaphs published by Dr. A. Berliner (LUHOT ABANIM, Frankf. a. M. 1881) which contains a great number of epitaphs, the work of Modena, show his marvelous skill and ingenuity in the making of Hebrew verse. It is not so much what he says, as the way he says it, the clever allusions to biblical and talmudic phrases, the brilliant play on words that betray his remarkable familiarity with Jewish literature, and show a genius of style that strongly suggests Immanuel. While his style is sometimes hopelessly mediæval, his lines are, as a rule, not forced and obscure. His epitaphs are not fulsome and extravagant in praise as one might expect of a professional epitaph-maker but rather modest, expressive of sentiments of sympathy and of the comfort of a heavenly reward. At times he is even tender. The great fertility of the resources of his style, as Dr. Berliner points out, may be seen in the fact that he never repeats himself, and is never at a loss for a new phrase to express the central thought common to all his inscriptions—consolation in the thought of a future life. At times he parodies even the Prayer-Book,<sup>23</sup> but with such ingenuity of new application that one cannot but readily forgive him his invasion of that sacred domain.

Leon Modena began his poetic activity at the age of thirteen by writing an elegy on his teacher Moses Basela (Della Rocca) which may be read both in Hebrew and Italian—the first, according to Reggio, to introduce this species of bilingual poetry which found many imitators in Italy.<sup>24</sup> At

<sup>23</sup> See I. Davidson's *Parody in Jewish Literature*, No. 39.

<sup>24</sup> This poem is given in *Midbar Yehudah* which also contains two commendatory sonnets, one by Samuel Archevolti, the other by Azariah Figo of Venice (d. 1647). Figo's sonnet is clear and elegant.

fifteen he wrote his own epitaph.<sup>25</sup> His collection of homilies MIDBAR JEHUDAH (Venice 1602) contains, in addition to the above, *Kinot* on Rabbis Jacob Cohen (d. 1596), Samuel Judah Katzenelenbogen (d. 1597), and Abigdor Cividali of Venice; and a song in honor of Doctor Eliezer Belgrado, none of which is above mediocrity. But as an imitator and parodist he shows great cleverness. His parody on the נגר המצחקים חרוז ascribed to Abraham Ibn Ezra "has the form and spirit of the original but is not as clear and forcible"<sup>26</sup>; but his sacred parodies, if one may use this expression, are very ingenious. Thus, his epitaph on Grassini (d. 1616) is splendid:

אדון נעלם	אשר הלך
בתום עם כל	יציר נברא
לעת אעשה	בחפץ אל
אזי טבת	שמו נקרא

<sup>25</sup> Geiger's *Jüd. Zeitschrift*, XI, 210. Modena composed his own epitaph which reads as follows:

ארבע אמות קרקע בחצר זה  
אגב קנין סודר מימות עולם  
הקנו ממעל ליהודה אריה  
ממודינו בזה נסתר נעלם.

Like Azariah dei Rossi, Modena saw a vision in which a prophet announced to him the day of his death; and, in imitation of dei Rossi's quatrain on the same occasion, he wrote:

על משכבי שוהה הש' ע'ז ליל י"ג טבת  
חלמתי עם נביא, מודיע לי קצי;  
עוד שנים ארבע, וירחים עוד שבעה  
תמוז או אב ש' פ' אגע על רבצי.

which, however, did not come true, since he died in 1648 (S. J. Rapoport in *Kerem Chemed*, V, 159-63).

On Modena see N. S. Libowitz, *Yehudah Aryeh Modena*, New York, 1901 (Hebrew); Introduction to *Zemah David* by J. Druckerman, New York, 1899 (Hebrew); Graetz, IX; and *J.E.*

<sup>26</sup> Davidson, *Parody in Jewish Literature*, 33.

ואחרי כ—	קרות הקול
לרב גרשין	מאד נורא
והוא חיה	והוא הווה
והוא יחיה	בתפארה.

(*Luhot Abanim*, No. 21. The dotted letters give the date, 18 Tebet, 5376).

קרוש נרחץ	תוך מי טוהר
מבין אחים	מוציא מצה
מרור כורך	כל הנשאר
צפון ברך	לאל נרצה.

(*ibid.*, No. 54, last four lines). מוציא מצה = removeth strife. מרור כורך וכו' = all who are left (who survived him) are wrapt in bitterness. צפון ברך וכו' = the hidden one (the dead) is blessed, and acceptable to God.

An ingenious one is also that on Joseph Melli who died (1611) while on a journey:

מארץ מולדתו	יצא יצא יוסף
לשוב עוד לביתו	ולא יכול יוסף
רוגז קפץ אותו	מרוגזו של יוסף
מות מצא אותו	טרופ טרף יוסף,

(*ibid.*, No. 44).

Or this one on the death of Esther Simḥah who died in 1590 on the eve of her wedding:

עלמה תמה	מות דמה
הגיע תור	הסתר אסתר:
יפה כלה	אותה כלה
וי היא בימי	גילת אסתר:

(*ibid.*, No. 83, alluding to Esther 2, 15 and Deut. 31, 18).

The following on Simḥah Servi (d. 1636) proves that the poet can also be deeply pathetic, and contains lines of great lyric beauty:

פתאום ישבה בדר בין החותים  
חמדת נשים כשושנים סוגה  
הן כעת אחר השיחים  
אשת חיל הרכה והענוגה  
הנה עולם זה כמלון אורחים  
על כן, כי אחרית השמחה תוגה

(No. 63); or:

אשה שנתגרשה מן ים נגרש  
אל חוף כולל בו כל התנחומין

(No. 109). Beautiful is this line, on an infant (the ten months old daughter of the poetess Sarah Copia Sullam):

שחר אשר נעדר בטרם יום.

(No. 158).

Of far greater interest and importance are the brothers Frances, Jacob b. David (1615 at Mantua-1667 at Florence), and Emanuel b. David (July 22, 1618 (?)<sup>27</sup>-Leghorn after 1703). Men of high rabbinic learning, acquainted with philosophy and secular literature, clear-headed and of a sane and logical turn of mind, they devoted their life to combating the evils of mysticism, credulity, and superstition. The seventeenth century saw the apotheosis of the Kabbalah. Jewish as well as Christian scholars of high attainment, and, otherwise, of a healthy and rational mind, held the Kabbalah in such high esteem that they were carried off their feet, as it were, by its mysteries. While this kabbalistic craze could not affect the Christian

<sup>27</sup> Gottheil in *J.E.*; D. Kohn, *אור וחושך*, 5, gives it c. 1625, while Brody in *Metek Sefatayim* (p. 5) as 1630.

scholars very injuriously outside of mental perversion, it wrought incalculable mischief to the Jewish people because it found embodiment in the person of a Messiah. Shabbethai Zebi, himself perhaps a victim of delusion, found thousands of ardent followers in all the lands of Jewish dispersion, and their enthusiasm knew no bounds in the anticipation of a speedy restoration in the Holy Land under the leadership of this God's Anointed. In vain did some few clear-headed rabbis and scholars protest against the insanity of Jews pinning their faith to a self-deluded fanatic and libertine, for such did Shabbethai become under the intoxication of his brief power. Their voices were voices crying in the wilderness. And even when the bubble burst in the *Annus Mirabilis* 1666, and Shabbethai himself embraced Mohammedanism to save his neck, many of his followers still persisted in their perversion, and others, losing heart, sank into all kinds of excesses to forget their disappointment. Shabbethai Zebi came dangerously near wrecking both the Jew and Judaism.

Under such circumstances, the two brothers Jacob and Emanuel must have been men of extraordinary courage to throw down the gauntlet to Shabbethai Zebi and his followers. The fight against the so-called Messiah became their main object in life, their passion; and the weapon they employed was that dangerous instrument—satire. In ZEBI MUDDAH (*A Fallen Stag*, in allusion to Shabbethai's name) they hurled all the shafts of ridicule and invective, of sarcasm and indignation, of irony, and mockery, against the impostor and his dupes. Moreover, Jacob Frances, realizing with the instinct of the philosophic thinker that the Kabbalah was the source of all this upheaval had the

hardihood to attack the Kabbalah itself<sup>28</sup>—the Kabbalah so strongly intrenched in the popular mind that it outranked even the Bible and the Talmud.<sup>29</sup> “Happy, indeed, is the people whom God had chosen as the standard-bearer of His Law,” says Jacob in his poem against the Kabbalah, “and happy indeed is the man who is able to penetrate to the depth of its secrets.” But the poet cannot restrain himself from crying out when he sees “asses approaching Mount Moriah,” or when things have reached such a pass that “a man is no man who does not prate about the God-head.” “From every street and market-place the Kabbalah shouts, and even infants in swaddling-cloths are busying themselves with mysteries. Ignoramuses who know nothing about nature and about the earth are absorbed in studying the “Circles of Heaven”; boors who know nothing of the Law are dealing in “secrets,” and libertines and charlatans are indulging in the Zohar.” “Great men,” he says in conclusion, “absorb themselves in metaphysics only after they have acquired a thorough knowledge of other, more practical branches of learning,” and he advises his readers to call the Torah “sister” and philosophy “friend.” Such unheard-of outspokenness and boldness naturally shocked the Kabbalist rabbis of Mantua who, thereupon, ordered every copy of the poem burned, so that only the poet’s copy remained.<sup>30</sup> The Venetian rabbis, with Simḥah (Simone)

<sup>28</sup> Part of this poem was published in David Kohn’s *Or we-Hosheḳ* (pp. 7-8) in *Ozar ha-Sifrut*, I, and in *Metek Sefatayim*, 72-73. It was saved from oblivion by Samson Morpurgo of Ancona who published it at the end of *Ez ha-Da’at*, his commentary on Peninni’s *Behinat ‘Olam*, Venice 1704; it is given also in the Introduction to Rapoport’s *Nahalat Yehudah*.

<sup>29</sup> D. Kohn, *Or we-Hosheḳ*, 8; *Metek Sefatayim*, 74.

<sup>30</sup> H. Brody in his edition of the *Metek Sefatayim* (p. 74) feels impelled to defend Jacob’s attitude to the Kabbalah by saying that he opposed only the pseudo-Kabbalah while he revered the “true” Kabbalah. David Kohn in *Or we-Hosheḳ* (p. 6) maintains, on the other hand, that Jacob

Luzzatto at their head, boldly stood by the side of Jacob Frances, and the fight spread all over Italy. The followers of the Turkish Messiah retaliated by denouncing Jacob as a heretic, attacked his house, and even made an attempt on his life. Nor did his brother Emanuel, who stood so nobly by him, escape persecution. He, like his brother, was compelled to leave his native city, wandered from place to place, even to Algiers, settling finally at Leghorn. And, when Jacob died in 1667 in the midst of the struggle, Emanuel continued the fight, and carried on the defense of his dead brother.

The ZEBI MUDDAH of the brothers Frances is unique in the Hebrew literature. Immanuel the Roman is humorous rather than sarcastic; Kalonymos b. Kalonymos, while bitter at times, is prompted by love rather than by hate, and love covers a multitude of sins; Menaḥem de Lonzano is

abhorred the Kabbalah as such, saying: "A Kabbalist is a fool. Jacob questioned the sanctity of the Zohar publicly and told every one that Simon b. Yoḥai was not its author." It seems to me that Kohn is right. From Emanuel's defense of his dead brother **לִבְנֵי וְשִׁמְעִי וַיָּכֹחַ** (pp. 11-12), it is quite evident that Jacob had no regard for the Kabbalah as such. He believed in the **סֵתְרֵי תוֹרָה** which is entirely distinct from mysticism though also designated Kabbalah. The date of the composition of the poem is also uncertain. Kohn seems to think it was written before "ZEBI MUDDAH" (p. 9), Brody that it was written after (p. 72). It was published originally on a page by itself with no date and place. From the fact that the Mantua rabbis were able to confiscate it, it may be inferred that it was first published at Mantua.

The Kabbalah took a deep hold upon the Jews of Italy almost from the time of the appearance of the Zohar, and became so strong that very few had the hardihood to say aught against it. Even Leon de Modena, himself an anti-Kabbalist and not at all a hypocrite, found it necessary to simulate his belief in mysticism as he confesses to his disciple David Finzi of Egypt: "If any one else asked me concerning this matter (the belief in metempsychosis), I would put him off with words or answer in the affirmative (with due mental reservation), since any one who differs from the mob (*hamon*) is called either a fool or a heretic." To his disciple, however, he affirmed his non-belief in such superstition. See D. Kohn, *Or we-Hosheḥ*, p. 5; Graetz, X, 131.

prompted by zeal. ZEBI MUDDAH, however, is inspired by hate, and is venomous to the extreme.

“My quill is charged with fire,  
My pen point is a dart;  
My tongue a poisoned arrow,  
To strike him to the heart,”

exclaims Jacob Frances (p. 103), and this is the keynote of the two parts of the poem. Many of the epithets the brothers employ are far from refined, and some would be considered obscene to-day. In extenuation, however, one must take into consideration the freedom of expression characteristic of the Italian literature of that period; and, above all, the necessity of applying heroic measures to cure the universal madness. Jacob anticipated the fate that would befall the “*Stag*,” and he would gladly have laughed at his ruin were it not that he feared for his people, whose faith in the impostor would finally “pile up destruction upon destruction, exile upon exile, affliction upon affliction” (p. 105). He denounces his persecutors who destroyed his home, and calls down dire vengeance upon their heads. He rails at the disciples of Shabbethai who are disregarding rabbinical laws and Jewish customs at the instigation of the new prophet (p. 115); and Emanuel denounces Shabbetha himself for his licentiousness (p. 123).<sup>81</sup> At times, in a tenderer mood, the poets plead with the people to realize

<sup>81</sup> He attacks a certain Hosea of Alexandria, one of Shabbethai's prophets, in this wise:

מה קול חמור נוער באוני אשמעה, הן באמת זה קולך הושע?  
מי את אשר תשאג ותנהום כארי, אם כזוב תדמה וצפרדע?  
בור ריק הלא אתה ואיך תחשב היות נחל מקור חכמה ובין נובע?  
הולך עלי גחון ואמר לבך כי בעננים ראשך נגע.

(*Zebi Muddah*, p. 124).



their folly and to return to their senses; at times they offer up prayers to God to forgive their people's lack of faith in Him, and have pity on them. At other times the brothers call upon each other to remain steadfast in their fight, and encourage each other with the hope that the day will yet come when their work in behalf of their people will be fully appreciated. Thus, Jacob:

שירי ראויים לחקוק על יהלום, אה כי לִזְכָּר על נֶזֶר יודפסו,  
 עוד יצאו ללקוט אבל לא ימצאו מֶלֶךְ אשר היום בטיט רמסו.

(p. 115); and Emanuel:

הה! כי דבר כזב ושוא שנאתי  
 על כן יחירתי בכפי שמתִי,  
 אם הפתאים יאהבו פתי  
 מאז לעומתם עֲדָנָה קמתי;  
 פני כחלמיש עלי זאת שִׁמְי  
 ולמורטים על זאת לחיי תתי.

(p. 127).

The poems constituting ZEBI MUDDAH, in clear, free almost rabbinic Hebrew, and in bold and vigorous figures, with a wealth of ingenious allusions, written mostly in monorime, are impressive, and strike home with telling effect. The sonnets interspersed here and there add the necessary element of variety to keep the poems from becoming monotonous. On the whole, ZEBI MUDDAH, by its naturalness, vigor, sincerity, and life-interest, stands in the midst of the colorless verse of that period like an oasis in a wilderness—refreshing and invigorating.

The same tone of vindictiveness, scorn, and bitterness that characterized the ZEBI MUDDAH rings also through the WIKKUAH LIBNI WE-SHIMEI,<sup>32</sup> compiled by Emanuel, and

<sup>32</sup> Published for the first time by H. Brody in Fuchs's *החוקר*, I; reprinted in pamphlet form, Cracow 1893.

written in the same vigorous diction and style. Composed in 1667 in Florence, in the form of a dialogue, it is an attack, fierce and violent, against the traducers of the memory of his brother Jacob, and is an ardent defense of his dead brother's attitude towards the Kabbalah. The dialogue is written in rimed prose, but contains one sonnet (p. 6), 3 octaves (p. 7), and 18 sestets (pp. 7-9; unfinished) of Jacob's, and four sonnets by Emanuel. Jacob's poems are vindictive utterances against his enemies. Full of bitterness against them, he uses his powerful pen to avenge himself upon them to the full. Keenly he feels the shameful attacks and the insults hurled at him:

מה אומרה? שיווי היש או ערד  
לכאב לבבי מחלת הרוח?  
אלאה נשוא עולם עבורת פרד  
עד מה עליהם אדכאה אשוח!

(p. 7). He was happy in his quiet home, he complains in his fifth sestet (p. 8); but his foes came, destroyed his home and his peace, while he was powerless to defend himself. He therefore turns to heaven for vengeance, and heaps imprecations upon the heads of his persecutors:

העת, המון שירי, לשבתך בית?  
קרא לכל הרי מנשאי הרב  
הכות בלי השאיר כנקף זית  
חיל מעני כדמות זאבי ערב  
עד היסוד עצמות מעני ערו,  
אכלו בשרם דם שתו ושכרו!

(*ibid.*, p. 8; for הרי cf. Ezek. 38, 21). As for himself he will never submit or give up the fight:

מצחי כשמיר עז תהי הפעם  
אראה אנוש נאה ואשפילהו;

יכבול גבה לב כבודות זעם  
 מני, יכלכל כאויל מחלהו.  
 לבני מרי אהיה לאיש מוכיח  
 אשום לים מְרִים גבול וברית.

(*ibid.*).

And this is Emanuel's parting shot at his brother's enemies :

אוצו כלבים זועקים לנבוח  
 הב! צעקו, הב, הב לשירך מעם;  
 אך יש בפי חץ — אם בפיהם רעם  
 אדע נשוך אם תדעו לצרות.

"O haste, ye dogs, aloud that bark,  
 That shout: 'Bow-wow, your song is trite';  
 They can but thunder—I can shoot;  
 They can but bark—while I can bite."

(p. 12).

The two brothers resembling each other so much in their mode of thought and in temperament, resemble each other in style also. Jacob's influence over his brother and pupil seems to be overmastering, and both are children of their age and generation. The mediæval and the modern seem to struggle for supremacy, and now the one and now the other tendency triumphs. In ZEBI MUDDAH the mediæval tone, both in rime and in mode of expression, is somewhat relieved by the passion, the all-absorbing seriousness, and the sincerity that impelled the brother-poets. In other poems, however, where such passion is absent, both poets relapse occasionally into hopeless mediævalism. Thus, Jacob's elegy on Shemaiah da Modena (מתק שפתים, 91-94) is replete with the ingenious puns, homonyms, and allit-

erations that are the joy of the mediæval poets, but which are labored and obscure :

צורי! מאד צר לי, לצירי אין צירי  
 גם שאגותי יתכו כמים:  
 מר לי למר מורי, צרור המור, ולו  
 אותיל כיולדה עלי אֶבְנִים.

(p. 92) ;

נערר הָרַר הָרֹר, וְרִדֵּר דָּר בְּכַל  
 לִבִּי, וְרַמְעַת דָּם בְּכַל עֵינַיִם

(p. 93). The same is true of his elegy on Azariah Figo, Leon da Modena, Samuel Masead, and Elijah. Though clearer and more forcible than the elegy on Shemaiah da Modena, it is just as mediæval. Here he even goes to the extent of dividing a word at the end of a line for the sake of the meter against which Archevolti protested so strongly ; and lines like :

אֶרְאֶה אֲשֶׁר אֵלֹף לֵאמֹר, שֶׁר לְשׁוֹר,  
 מִשְׁכִּיל לְמַסְכִּיל, בֶּר לְבוֹר נִכְנְעוּ,

(מתק שפתים, 97), sufficiently attest the hold Spanish-Arabic influences still have on him. This is likewise true of Emanuel who composed a poem consisting wholly of proper names (*ibid.*, 58-9), in his elegy on his father where the echo responds at the end of each verse, a device employed also by Zacuto ; and in many other lines with which he illustrates his treatise on prosody, *MEṬEḲ SEFATAYIM*. On the other hand, when they use modern Italian forms of versification, they become modern also in expression and thought with hardly a trace of mediævalism. The form of verse they employ seems to transform them into children of that period also in thought and style. Thus, Jacob's elegy on Rabbi Menaḥem Cases (died 1648),

a canzone, is a veritable lyric gem. The poet, overcome by his sorrow at the death of so great a master, addresses himself to all nature; to earth, to cease yielding its fragrance in verdure and bloom, to the heavens, to turn black with darkness, and to the sun, to refuse to shed his rays and warmth, for,

מה זה ואיך חָמָה עֵדֶן תִּזְרִיחַ  
 ישחק למולי שֶׁחַק  
 חלד יבול יצמיח  
 ויחשוב עניי לֶדֶק ושחק?  
 הה! כי עלי תלי הריסותינו  
 יבנו ברוב עֲזָמוֹ  
 בנין שמחות למו  
 וימצאו הון באבדתינו.

(מתק שפתים, 101). How many such lines are found in the works of his contemporaries? And what tenderness pervades the following octave:

סורה אדוני אל מנוחֶתך  
 שם מתלאות הזמן תרניע  
 הנה לפניך ולקראתך  
 עולים ויורדים מלאכי רקיע  
 שלום לך שלום בביאתך  
 מִזָּה ומִזָּה, זה וזה יביע.  
 תקיץ ותציץ כאשר יציצו  
 כל שוכני עפר ביום יקיצו.

(*Kol 'Ugab*, p. 59b).

This feeling of tenderness that pervades many of Jacob's poems is stronger still and deeper in Emanuel, for misfortune has marked him for her own. His father died

in 1651; his first wife Hannah Grazia in 1652, and their two children David and Esther soon followed. His second wife Miriam Visiani whom he married in 1656 died in 1663, and their only son Issachar in 1664 at the age of seventeen months. To crown his misery, his older brother and teacher Jacob whom he loved most tenderly died in 1667. His fight against Shabbethai Zebi had cost him the friends of his youth who had forsaken him through all his troubles on account of his unpopularity with the followers of the Kabbalah. Thus, in his thirties, he remained lonely and friendless, feeling that his life in the future held out no hope and no cheer. Thus he laments:

שכול ואלמון פעמים אלקה, על כן ברמה כנהי שניתי  
 .....  
 מי זה למשענתי בזקנתי יהי, מי זה לעדני אחרי בלותי,  
 מי זה יעצים עיני ועלי יאבל, אם לא בני זה כאשר אויתי  
 .....  
 מה לו לאיוב כי יקלל יום אשר נולד ומה ראה ולא ראיתי?

(Elegy on second wife; *ממזרח וממערב*, No. 3, 77).<sup>33</sup> And it is indeed in Job-like lamentations that the three elegies on his wives and children are written. They are heart-rending cries of woe and despair. Carried away by his sorrow and grief, the poet gives vent to his feelings; and his lines, like waves of a stormy ocean, rush on impetuous, turbulent, and violent. In his sonnet and elegy on his brother, he consoles himself with the thought that fate cannot possibly hold out any more misfortunes for him, since the loss of his brother was the greatest possible blow that could strike him:

<sup>33</sup> Published by David Kaufmann, with introduction, pp. 69-78.

אשוב ללבי זאת והתנחמתי:  
 כי אם בחסר כל נשארתי  
 לא יאמרו לי זאת ועוד אֶחָרָת.

(מתק שפתים, p. 79). In another sonnet he comforts himself with the thought that even he would die some day;

אל תהמי נפשי ואל תשתוּחַחִי  
 כי גם בצרותי שנותי עוברות:  
 כי איש מעונה לא לעולמים יחי.

(*ibid.*, p. 86); and how pathetic are the lines:

נטו ימי בחרות ופנו עורף  
 גז חיש כציץ ימלו  
 כלו בעשן כלו  
 וסתיו ימי חיי ועת החורף  
 ישכית בגן עדני פרי ופרח  
 ובשערי יַמְטִיר כפור וקרח.

(*Kol 'Ugab*, p. 59a).

Happily, Emanuel does not succumb to these moods, but rises superior to them. As seen from the ZEBI MUD-DAH, the brothers are satirists above all; but their shafts were not exhausted on Shabbethai Zebi. Woman is a favorite topic with them. Thus, Jacob:

“On three occasions, only three,  
 A woman’s movements should be free:  
 The first at birth, and then when she  
 Is led beneath the canopy.  
 The third and last—and this the best—  
 When she is led to her final rest.”

(*Kol 'Ugab*, No. 15). Again, in a sonnet (*ibid.*, No. 38), he ridicules a man for mourning after his dead wife. “My

*wife* lives on forever, defying age and time, *on account of my sins.*" In fact, the two brothers wrote a dialogue *ויבוח איתא* on woman,<sup>34</sup> one quotation from which will suffice to indicate the tenor of the whole:

גַּל זֶה לַמֶּשֶׁא וְלֹא לַמִּצְבָּה  
 שְׁמַתִּי לַאֲשֵׁתִי עַל קְבוּרָתָהּ  
 פֶּן חֵם וְשִׁלּוּם אַחֲרֵי מוֹתָהּ  
 תִּקּוּם, וְאֵל בֵּיתִי תֵּהִי שׁוֹבָה (שְׁבָה?).

In another, more serious, poem Jacob satirizes the power of gold:

כִּמָּה נְסִיכֵי עִם בַּעַת יִשְׁכּוּ  
 עַל כֶּסֶם זֶהֱכֶם נִלְכְּדוּ בַּפֶּתַח,  
 כִּמָּה בַּמַּטּוֹת פֹּז בַּעַת יִשְׁכּוּ  
 בִּלְתִּי יְקוּמוּן, יִרְדּוּ לַשַּׁחַת.  
 .....  
 כִּמָּה בְּכָלִי זֶהֱב וְלֹא בַּחֲרָם  
 כִּמָּה וְכִמָּה יִמְצְאוּ הָאָרֶם.  
 הֵה, כִּי לִשּׁוֹן זֶהֱב וְאֵם אֵלֶמֶת  
 תֵּהֶם כָּל לִשּׁוֹן וְאֵם נוֹאֶמֶת.

(*Kol 'Ugab*, p. 58a).

Emanuel also is able to write in a similar strain, though he is humorous rather than sarcastic. To a young man who asked him to compose an octave without assigning a subject, he replies:

"An octave, now, is your request?  
 Then bring me pen and ink, my son!  
 But while of rime I am in quest  
 Behold the half already done!  
 And, if God wills it, all the rest

<sup>34</sup> Quoted by Brody in *Metek Sefatayim*, p. 17. I do not know whether this dialogue has as yet been published in its entirety.



Will likewise written be anon.  
 But two lines more? An easy task,  
 And here is the octave which you ask."

In a similar strain, his epigrams are very clever:

"The poor who begs with bated breath,  
 And asks for alms with tearful eyes  
 Is surely not afraid of death:  
 Who begs, a thousand times he dies."

(*ibid.*, No. 47);

"That speech alone distinguishes  
 The brute from man is wrong:  
 Else, why did God upon the fool  
 Bestow a speaking tongue?"

(*ibid.*, No. 48).

The following are examples of his mock-epitaphs  
 (מתק שפחים, 24-6):

On Democritus:

מעינך דמעה תהי מוחק  
 קורא, ותצחק על קבורתי  
 כי כן אני גם אחרי מותי  
 לו יש לאל ידי, אהי שוחק.

On Heracleitus:

כלו (ב)חיי בדמעות, כלו  
 עיני, עדי בואי בניא צלמות,  
 גם פה אבכה אחרי המות  
 אך שערי דמעה, אהה, ננעלו.

On a fool:

אדם שוטה נקבר בזה  
 מעל קברו, קורא, תשטה;  
 ודעה כי גם אחרי מותו  
 טוב התרחק מאיש שוטה.

On a tale-bearer :

בַּקְבוּרָה זֹאת אָדָם נִבּוּהַ  
הוֹלֵךְ רֵכִיל, מוֹצִיא דְבָר  
גַּם אִם יוּכַל יִטִּיל אִיבָה  
בֵּין הַמֵּתִים הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה.

But Emanuel can also be graceful, as is shown by the sonnet addressed to his teacher Joseph Fermo, rabbi of Ancona :

“If upon the heaven’s face  
The moon at night in bright array  
‘Midst starry hosts doth hold her sway  
And brilliant shines in gentle grace,  
Her light, illumining all space,  
Is stolen from the Lord of Day;  
Is but the sun’s reflected ray,  
When he and she meet face to face.

Thus, when I taught in public ear  
The sacred Law, O teacher mine!  
And people hearkened far and near,  
Not mine the light I shed but thine.  
Thy reflex did *me* glorify:  
Thou art the sun, the moon am I.”

(*Kol ‘Ugab*, No. 4).

In his younger days Emanuel was guilty even of writing love poems. He abhorred the sensual and the obscene in any language and especially in Hebrew. For this reason he condemned Immanuel the Roman; “but a poet need not depart from decency, and he is not to be blamed for praising his wife or his betrothed or an unmarried woman whom he intends to marry” (מֵתָק שְׁפָתַיִם, p. 47-48). Accord-

ingly he had no scruples in singing the charms of his betrothed Hannah Grazia, in a beautiful sonnet, and of other women in lines which are not always so pure in tone and expression. Later on, however, he became conscience-stricken that he had permitted himself to sing "songs of evil" in honor of artificially made-up women:

שֶׁצֶר אֲשֶׁר הוֹזֵהב לְעֵין הַחֶרֶם  
מֵצַח אֲשֶׁר נִמְרַט בְּמִלְקָחַיִם  
פָּנִים מְלוּמָשִׁים בְּטוֹחַ אֶרֶם —

הָיוּ בְּעֵינֵינוּ זֶהב פְּרוּיִם  
זֶהר לְבִנָּה מִרְחַבִּי רִקִּיעַ,  
שְׁנֵי מַעֲוֵרֵב עִם כְּפֹר שָׁמַיִם!

(*ibid.*, p. 84), and he recants. He takes a vow never to write such poems again, but to devote himself to didactic poems exclusively—a resolve to which he remained faithful.

An elegant verse-builder, but without originality and without poetic power whatever, is Abraham b. Shabbethai Cohen, rabbinical scholar and physician (1670-1729). Born in Crete the year after the island was wrested from the Republic of Venice by Turkey, and removing afterwards to Zante, Abraham Cohen received his education in Ancona under Manoaḥ Vita Provençale, and his work KEHUNNAT ABRAHAM (*Priesthood of Abraham*) was very likely written there, though it was not published till 1719 (Venice). KEHUNNAT ABRAHAM is a rimed paraphrase of the Psalms. Each verse of each psalm is paraphrased in a separate stanza, the poet preserving the same stanzaic structure throughout the given psalm, but employing varying forms of versification for the different psalms. In addition, the contents of each psalm are given in a doubly rimed couplet at the beginning of each paraphrase proper; while at the

end of each book, the opening lines of each paraphrased psalm are combined into a metric monorime. The book is introduced by the highly enthusiastic panegyrics of various rabbis. Joseph Fiammeta (not Piatita as given by Delitzsch), rabbi of Ancona, extolls the poem in eight well written octaves; Isaac Vita Cantarini (Feb. 2, 1644-June 8, 1723), and Shabbethai Marini (died 1740), both rabbis and physicians of Padua, sing sonnets in his honor, as do also Isaac b. Asher Pacifico (Shalom), Mordecai Ferrarese, and Jacob Aboab. The poet replies to each not only in the same stanzaic structure he employed, but even in the same rime words. Abraham Cohen paraphrased the *PIRKE SHIRAH* also.

In spite of the encomiums of his contemporaries and of Delitzsch, the work of Abraham Cohen is not a masterpiece. He certainly enriched Hebrew poetry with a wealth of Italian stanzas hitherto unemployed by Italian Hebrew poets; and his diction is purely biblical throughout, in accordance with his own protest against the employment of talmudic and Aramaic words in Hebrew poetry, and in striking contrast with his own highly artificial and mixed prose. But the diffuseness of each stanza destroys its beauty. The vigor of biblical poetry is due, to a great extent, to its conciseness. Prophets and psalmist used but few words; each word represents a thought and an idea. Nothing is superfluous. Biblical poetry contains a multiplicity of imagery in a paucity of words. Abraham Cohen did not appreciate this fact. Compelled by his own choice to represent each verse by a stanza, he is prolix and verbose. As a consequence, all the beauty and sublimity of the psalm are destroyed. While Abraham Cohen succeeds in reproducing the thought of the Psalms, he does not succeed in reproducing their spirit.

The last and perhaps the most characteristic poet of the seventeenth century as well as of the entire semi-mediaeval period is Moses Zacuto (about 1625-Oct. 1, 1697, at Mantua). Born in Amsterdam, a descendant of a famous Portuguese family, he received a splendid education both secular and rabbinic, the latter at the "Midrash Ez ha-Hayyim," the Jewish college of Amsterdam, and thus was a schoolmate of Benedict Spinoza. Unlike his illusrious schoolmate, he showed a marked tendency towards mysticism from his earliest youth, and his eagerness to be initiated into the Kabbalah led him to Posen to study under Sheftel, the son of Isaiah Hurwitz. In 1645 he left Poland for Verona, then came to Venice, whence he intended sailing for the Holy land. He was, however, dissuaded from his purpose, and was elected to the Venetian rabbinate. In 1673 he was called to the rabbinate of Mantua which position he occupied to his death. While Zacuto led an active literary life and filled his office with dignity, he was a kabbalist first and foremost, and even an ardent adherent of Shabbethai Zebi. His tendency towards fanaticism is best illustrated by the anecdote told of him to the effect that he fasted forty days in order to forget his Latin because a knowledge of that profane tongue was to him incompatible with kabbalistic inspiration!

An ardent soul, a dreamer of dreams, and a seer of visions, Zacuto evinced a poetic talent from his early youth. Nurtured at the breast of the Kabbalah, itself a product of the imagination run riot, his poetic energy was frittered away on the search after the mystic and the mysterious which excites but does not inspire the mind. Whatever enthusiasm he possessed was devoted to the Kabbalah, and his poems, in consequence, lack inspiration and emotion. Only his religious poems of which he wrote forty-seven

show spontaneity and traces of lyric beauty. Still, Zacuto was a poet; and his two longer poems deserve special consideration, the one because it is the first of its kind in Hebrew literature, the second because it is so characteristic of the age.

YESOD 'OLAM (*The Foundation of the World*) written by Zacuto in his youth, is the first dramatic poem in the Hebrew language. Why the drama did not flourish among Jews is easily understood. The Greek and Roman drama, originally of a religious nature and accompanied by Dionysiac orgies, the Hebrews despised as a species of idolatrous worship which it was. During the Middle Ages when Jewish existence was so precarious, though the theater had been purified under Christian influences and was really biblical in its nature, Jewish dramatic performances were out of the question. Moreover, the insults heaped upon the Jews by the clowns and comedians of the stage, and the humiliation they were exposed to, especially during carnival days in Rome, did not tend to diminish the hatred of the Jew toward theatrical performances. In the fifteenth and sixteenth century, with the development of the drama into the miracle play, Jewish prejudice against the stage gradually disappeared. In fact, we find a species of drama and dramatic performances in the Jewish Purim plays. However, as the drama usually flourishes in times of great national prosperity and success, no true Hebrew drama could reasonably have come into existence before the seventeenth century and anywhere else outside of Holland. Here the Jews were treated with all kindness and consideration; Holland was victorious, in the height of her glory and prosperity, and her own national drama reached the zenith, of its development in Joosd van Vondel, the Dutch Shakespeare. Under such circumstances it was

natural for a talented youth like Zacuto, eager for poetic expression, to try his hand at dramatic composition.

As biblical plays were then in vogue, and as a Jewish poet in particular would feel more at home in a biblical environment than anywhere else, Zacuto selected a biblical hero for the purpose of dramatization—and what nobler character could serve his purpose better than that of Abraham? Traditionally the founder not only of the Jewish race but of the Jewish faith as well; a man kind, generous, hospitable, an enthusiast ready and willing to sacrifice both his own life and that of his son for the love of his God, Abraham is, indeed, the type of the Jewish hero. With the example of martyred Marannos fresh in his mind, the horrible crackling of their bones at the *autos-da-fé* still ringing in his ears, the poet might have hoped to present to his suffering brethern the archetype of Jewish heroism that, like a burning bush, is burned again and again but is not consumed, since there is a special Providence watching over him. How did the dramatist utilize his opportunity? The plot will tell:

“Abraham, a philosopher and monotheist, destroyed all the idols he found at the house of his father, Terah. Terah, grieved and incensed at the atrocious sacrilege perpetrated by his son, complains to Nimrod, the king and judge, and asks him to bring his heretic son to reason. Nimrod summons Abraham to appear before his tribunal which Abraham does and is charged with heresy. Abraham boldly declares his belief in one God, argues with Nimrod’s counsellors and sages, and ridicules their idols. Nimrod finally passed the death sentence on Abraham who is carried away to be thrown into the burning furnace.

“Haran, Abraham’s brother, undetermined whether to declare himself a follower of Abraham or of Nimrod, de-

cides to await the result of Abraham's punishment. The king's officers rush in and tell of Abraham's miraculous escape in that the fire refused to consume him. Haran declares his faith in Abraham's God, and Nimrod orders him thrown into the furnace. Soon Abraham appears, followed by the awe-stricken populace, and harangues them upon the power of God, and admonishes them to forsake their idols. Terah and his household, Lot, Sarah, Abraham's niece, and Milkah, Nahor's wife, worship Abraham's God, while Nahor, Abraham's brother, persists in his idolatry."

Such is the plot of the YESOD 'OLAM, the first Hebrew drama, as elaborated from the Midrash (Ber. Rab. c. 38, section 19). As a drama, it must be stated at once, it is a complete failure. The poet had neither the technical skill nor the artistic conception of the true dramatist. The monologues and dialogues are too long, too elaborate, and entirely out of proportion. There is little dramatic action, and songs are introduced promiscuously. The form of rime used, mostly quatrains, and a great many sonnets, is ill-suited to the purpose of the dialogue. If the poet's motive in the composition of the drama was to call upon his people to remain steadfast in their faith, this appeal is put in the closing lines of the drama in the mouth not of Abraham, but of the idolater Nahor—and this destroys the effect. The drama, as a whole, degenerates into a theological disputation. Still as a dramatic poem and as the work of a mere youth, it is a work of promise.

Abraham is a character worthy of the patriarch, a truly heroic figure, a thinker, a philosopher, an orator who defies all soothsayers and magicians, and sways the populace at will; a hero who scorns the despot Nimrod and looks death boldly in the face; a faithful servant of God,



and a zealous missionary. In strong antithesis is placed Nimrod, the type of an Oriental despot, a self-complacent tyrant, regarding himself as a deity, exacting divine obedience and honors from his servants. The conflict going on between the prophet and the tyrant, the man of God and the man of the sword, the zealous missionary and the mighty hunter, is strongly emphasized throughout the poem. The diction of the poem is pure, biblical, and poetic; the phrases are well chosen and free from servile imitation of the Bible; though three Aramaic phrases are employed for the sake of the rime. The sentiments of the poem are lofty and noble, and the tone as well as style of the prayers is especially elevated. Taking it all in all, the YESOD 'OLAM is a worthy achievement, and justly regarded as a landmark in the history of Hebrew poetry.

Judging from the long list of *dramatis personae* given at the beginning of the drama which do not appear in the drama itself, it is probable that the YESOD 'OLAM, as we have it, is only the first act of a drama which the poet intended to extend to greater proportions. Why he did not carry out his design, must, of course, remain a matter of conjecture. This is also true of the motives which led the poet to the composition of this drama. Dr. A. Berliner, the editor of YESOD 'OLAM (1874), maintains, in his learned introduction, that Zacuto who, in all probability, wrote his drama for Purim evening entertainments, wished to hold up to his generation a noble example of self-sacrifice for the glory of God in the person of Abraham. Mr. Israel Abrahams, argues, on the other hand, that Zacuto wished to promulgate the universalistic *mission of Israel*; for, had he intended to hold up an example of readiness to die for Israel's faith, why did he not take Daniel as his

hero?<sup>35</sup> Most probably, however, Zacuto had no ulterior motive at all. Like the Latin dramas of the Italian scholars, this Hebrew drama was written by a scholar for scholars, and not for the public; was written merely to satisfy a desire for self-expression, and to prove an ability to handle a dead language. Moreover, while Latin plays were sometimes produced in the presence of Latin scholars, there is no record to show that plays in Hebrew had ever been produced even on Purim. Again, had Zacuto intended to exemplify Abraham's self-sacrifice for the emulation of the Marannos, he would not have written in Hebrew which was to them a sealed book. Nor is it conceivable that Zacuto, the mystic and kabbalist, would have dreamed of teaching a universalistic mission of Israel. The fact that Zacuto did not publish his drama would show conclusively that he looked upon it as a work of youthful amusement, unimportant, insignificant. Whether the poem was written in Amsterdam or in Italy is not stated. The prevailing form of versification and the frequent use of the sonnet show its Italian influences clearly enough.

Entirely different in character as well as in style and expression is Zacuto's *magnum opus* TOFTEH 'ARUK (*Hell Prepared*). Written at a mature age, and under the influences of the Kabbalah which had mastered him completely, Zacuto undertook to describe the punishment and tortures meted out to sinners after death. While all works of this character are necessarily influenced by Dante's *Inferno*, Zacuto's "Hell" is not a mere imitation of Dante. He does not, indeed, reach the sublimity of Dante, and does not possess his sweep of imagination; nor is his poem as elaborate or worked out with the mathematical detail and

<sup>35</sup> See the chapter on the Purim-Play and the Hebrew Drama in his *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages*.

exactness which makes Dante's *Inferno* so vivid and impressive. Still, Zacuto's presentation is none the less real and positive. Zacuto embodied in this poem the Jewish conception of hell as elaborated during the Middle Ages, and as emphasized by the Kabbalah. Zacuto, therefore, did for the mediæval Jewish conception of Hell what Dante had done for the Christian conception of it—stereotyped it, gave it permanent literary form.

TOFTEH 'ARUK opens with the soliloquy of the dead sinner who does not yet realize the fact of his death. The strange sensation of actual death leaves him dazed, but conscious. He begins by railing against the physicians whose business it is to kill rather than to heal; wondering, with grim humor, why criminals condemned to death are not turned over to physicians for treatment rather than to the executioner, since the result is inevitably the same. He complains bitterly against his friends, his wife and children who have forsaken him, leaving him to his fate, and calls upon death for relief (stanzas 1-26). All of a sudden he beholds a frightful scene: a valley full of caves and crevices seething with sulphuric fires, emitting terrible fumes, the ground covered with burning pitch in which miserable wretches are sunk up to the neck. The fences or walls surrounding the valley are ovens of flames, hissing and blazing fires, fanned by hurrricanes. Near by, on the other hand, he sees frozen lakes surrounded by hills of eternal snow and ice. Trembling with fear, he looks about him and beholds gigantic figures, "tall as the masts of a ship," with horns on their foreheads, their bodies entirely covered with eyes. These monsters were the demons whose business it was to torment the doomed souls with all manner of indescribable torture. One of these monsters finally approaches the new arrival, and his agony begins (stanzas

27-51). The dead sinner presents a bold front, and demands to know where he is and why he is thus punished. He offers to bribe his tormentor with all the earthly wealth he possessed while in life. To each of his questions and entreaties the devil replies mockingly with but a single word, an echo of the sinner's own word (stanzas 52-69). Finally (stanzas 70-134) the devil begins his explanation. He reads a long list of crimes and sins committed by his victim while on earth. In language ingenious but ambiguous, homonymic and mystifying, evidently intended to bewilder his listener, he tauntingly compares the change in the latter's condition since yesterday, the day of his death, and goes into a description of the seven chambers of Gehenna (the *שבעה מדורי גיהנם* of the Talmud; stanzas 135-177). The first, a pit full of hissing snakes is intended for blasphemers and hypocrites; the second, a fiery chamber wherein are punished magicians, dishonest public officials, the immoral and licentious, and *those who failed to attend divine worship*; the third, wherein are tortured scoffers, usurers, false friends, irreverent worshipers, and those who contemptuously refuse to *respond the Amens to public prayers*; the fourth, in which the sinners sink in dung and refuse, is kept for the haughty rich, the selfish, bribers, bribe-takers, and procurers; the fifth in which the doomed are cut to pieces by hordes of devils with flaming swords is the abode of the mischief-makers, the quarrelsome, the niggards, and uncharitable; the sixth is intended for the self-indulgent and the vain; in the seventh and lowest, adulterers and rebels against God are boiled in red hot caldrons. While those who are doomed in the first six chambers are allowed to rest on the sabbath and holidays, those in the seventh chamber are never given surcease from their torture. The devil winds up (stanzas 178-185) with

a brief description of the seven departments of Paradise wherein the just, crowned in glory, bask in the eternal sunshine of God's presence; and who, beholding the torments of the wicked, justify God's judgment, and bless Him for their own happy life.

Shocking as the conception of the poem may seem to us of to-day, in the seventeenth century such beliefs were common; and, to the mind saturated with the mysteries of the Kabbalah, all too real. At any rate, the sincerity of the poet is beyond question. To him there is no distinction between moral criminals and sinners against the ritual and ceremonial: those who refuse to respond the Amen are classed in the category of scoffers and usurers, and those who fail to attend divine worship are classed with the licentious. And this is indeed the mediæval conception of religion; since each commandment and practice is regarded as equally holy and binding.

In style and diction *TOFTEH 'ARUK* is different from the *YESOD 'OLAM* in that the diction is not always biblical but mixed with Aramaisms, and the style is more complex, artificial, homonymic, involved. Perhaps, as suggested above, the poet's intention was to make the devil's speech correspond to his character. In the devil's rôle as tormentor it was fit for him to use words which would confuse the mind of his questioner who was eager to have his anxiety allayed. In this respect, the style of the *TOFTEH 'ARUK* is a survival of mediævalism, though the versification is modern and Italian. On the whole, as a didactic poem, it is vigorous, and a vivid presentation of a popular belief, and is worthy of an honorable place in the literature of that class. Immanuel's "*Hell*," vague and mild, is written in rimed prose; and Rieti, the first to give the subject an avowedly poetic form, failed completely in his attempt,

because he lacked the imagination necessary to vivify such a topic. At any rate, if any Italian Hebrew poet deserves the honorable appellation of the Hebrew Dante, it is Moses Zacuto.

As Zacuto's longer poems show two distinct tendencies in style and expression, the one clear, forcible, simple, the other obscure and enigmatic, difficult, so do his minor poems also. Of these, the elegy on the death of his teacher Saul Morteira of Amsterdam (1670)<sup>36</sup> is written in the style of TOFTEH 'ARUK, and compares with it in ambiguity, artificiality, and unintelligibility. It consists of seven sonnets, each one ending, in a slightly modified form, with the refrain **בְּנִינָה אֶל הָרֹד בְּכִינָה** from David's lament over Saul (II Sam. 1, 24). In an introduction consisting of three paragraphs he explains the cause of his grief: a sun rivaling the luminary of heaven, the sun of charity, of sacred eloquence, of Hebrew poetry, of the rabbinate, of jurisprudence, of dialectics and of polemics, . . . and the poem proper is an elaboration of the aspect of each activity. The poet calls upon all the sciences to join him in bewailing the dead master who was an embodiment of all the sciences and all the virtues. The Levites of the sanctuary weep for their brother Levite with whom all sweetness and song have ceased. As he appears before the throne of Divine Majesty to receive his recompense, the celestial beings are dumb (**מְלִיִּם עֲצֹרוּ אֵילִים נָנְרוּ בְּאֵלִים**) with admiration at the greatness of one who was an educator of the young, a defender of the faith, a victorious combatant of heresy, and a fiery orator whom none could equal in his skill of utilizing biblical texts for homi-

<sup>36</sup> Published by D. Kaufmann in the *REJ.*, XXXVII, 115-19, under the cation of "*L'Élégie de Mose Zacuto.*" On Zacuto see A. Kahana, **לְהַסְטוּרִיָּה בְּאִשְׁלִיָּה** *הַיִּשְׂרָאֵלִית* in *Ha-Goren*, III, 175-180.

letic purposes. "It is impossible," says Kaufmann,<sup>37</sup> "to put in their true light, outside of writing a commentary, the numerous allusions which, for the most part, are based upon the Sephardic pronunciation of the Hebrew, the references to Torah and prophets, the use made of scientific terminology, and the play of words which one meets with in this poem." In this instance Zacuto certainly followed to the letter the principle laid down by Emanuel Frances that obscurity is a great poetic virtue.<sup>38</sup> His religious poems (HẖEN KOL ḤADASH, Amsterdam 1712), on the other hand, are much clearer, more intelligible, and display, at times, deep lyric emotions. Zacuto was not capable of sustained effort in his longer poems; but he was a poet nevertheless. His influence on the subsequent development of Italian Hebrew poetry may be seen not only in his imitators, but even in the greatest poet of the eighteenth century, Moses Ḥayyim Luzzatto.

*(To be continued)*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 112-113.

<sup>38</sup> דע שדרך משוררים לברוח מדברים קלים ולבקש קשיי החשנה (מתק שפתים) והיא היא תפארתם (p. 42).